

# Total Deaths, Leading Causes, & Life Expectancy

## Definitions:

**Total deaths** includes deaths from all causes in a given year. ICD-9-CM codes 0-999.

**Leading causes**, as presented here, are based on the National Center for Health Statistics' 72-category cause of death scheme used for national rankings.

**Life expectancy** is the number of years babies born in a given year can be expected to live.

## Summary

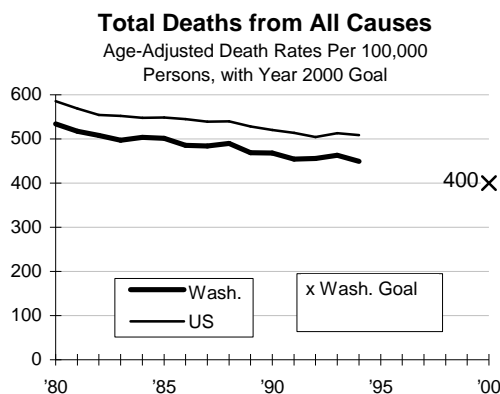
In 1994, there were 39,829 deaths in Washington (crude rate 746.6 per 100,000 population, age-adjusted rate 449.4 per 100,000).

Washington's age-adjusted total death rate is lower than the national rate and going down, and has been since 1980. The 1994 rate for males was considerably higher than that for females, and the 1994 rates for blacks and native Americans were significantly higher than that for whites.

The ten leading causes of death in Washington in 1994 were (in order) heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), unintentional injuries, flu and pneumonia, diabetes, suicide, HIV, and liver disease (see Technical Notes for definitions). These ten causes accounted for over 80% of all deaths in 1995. Some of them, like cancer, are in reality groups of very distinct diseases, each with its own causes, risk factors, treatments, and preventive measures.

## Time Trends

With a few slight exceptions, the total death rate in Washington has declined every year since 1980. The data shown in the chart below are



age-adjusted death rates. The technical appendix has a detailed explanation of age-adjustment; simply put, it is a statistical method of producing rates that compensate for the fact that populations in different geographic areas (two different counties, for example) may have very different age structures that will affect crude (unadjusted) rates.

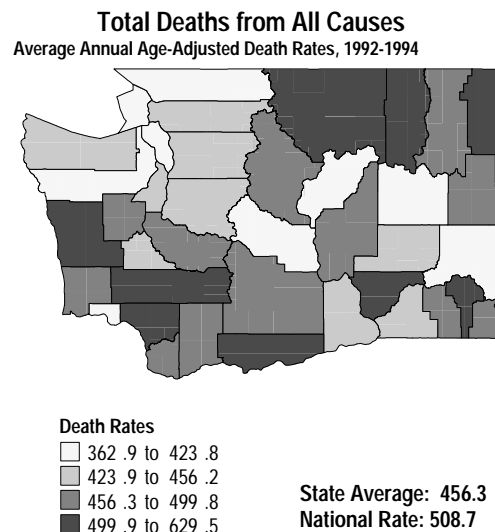
## Year 2000 Goal

Washington's goal for the year 2000 is an age-adjusted total death rate of 400/100,000 or lower. The chances of achieving this goal look good.

## Geographic Variation

Washington's overall age-adjusted death rate has been consistently lower than the national rate throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

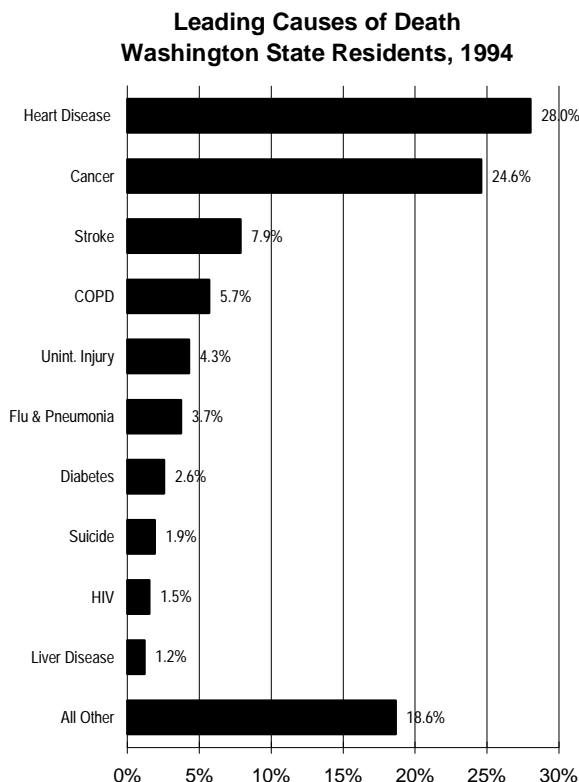
The map below shows county variation in average annual age-adjusted total death rates for the years 1992-1994. Those rates varied from a high of 629.5 to a low 362.9. The highest rates were in Ferry, Pend Oreille, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Lewis, Garfield, Okanogan, Cowlitz, Franklin, and Columbia Counties. The lowest



rates were in San Juan, Island, Douglas, Whitman, Whatcom, Jefferson, Wahkiakum, Lincoln, Kittitas, and Kitsap Counties.

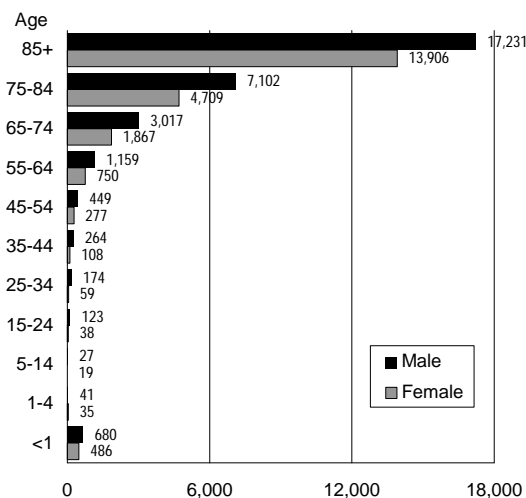
## Leading Causes of Death and Distribution by Age and Gender

Currently there are about 40,000 deaths each year in Washington. The chart immediately below shows the ten leading causes of death in Washington in 1994.



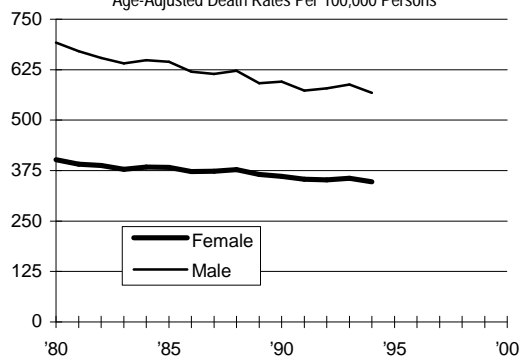
## Total Deaths from All Causes by Age and Gender

Age-Specific Deaths per 100,000, Wash, 1994

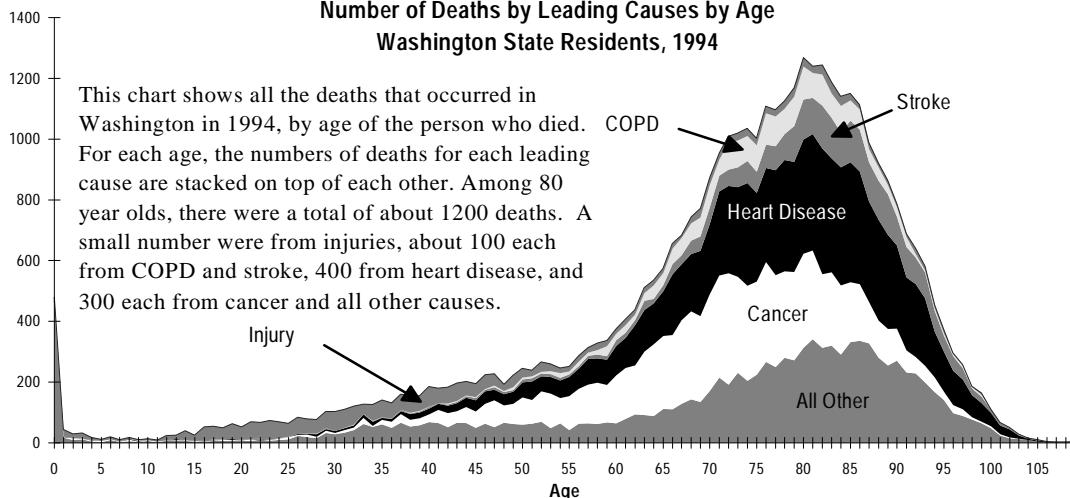


## Total Deaths from All Causes, by Gender

Age-Adjusted Death Rates per 100,000 Persons



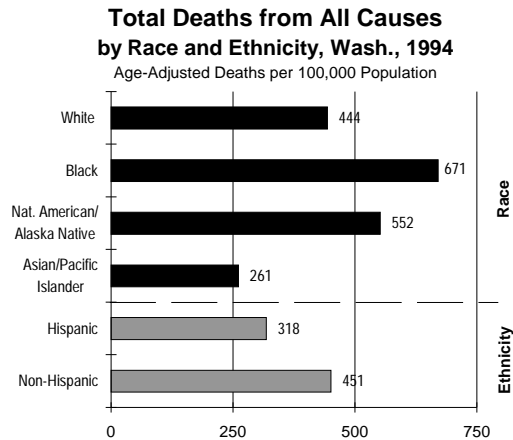
## Number of Deaths by Leading Causes by Age Washington State Residents, 1994



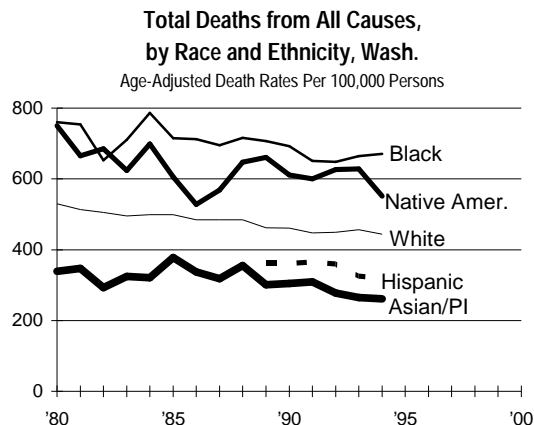
## Race and Ethnicity

In 1994, age-adjusted total death rates in Washington for blacks and native Americans/Alaska natives were significantly higher than the rates for whites.

For total deaths and for individual causes discussed in this publication, the rate among whites is always very close to the rate for the entire population, since the great majority of the state's population (88.5%) is white.

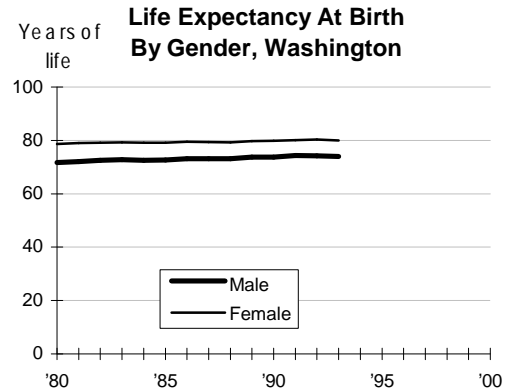


Over time, death rates are more variable for smaller populations. In the chart below, the Native American/Alaska Native death rate is the most variable because that group constitutes less than 2% of the total state population. Blacks, at about 3% of the population, have the next most variable rate. Despite their variability, those two rates have been consistently higher than the rates for other racial and ethnic groups.

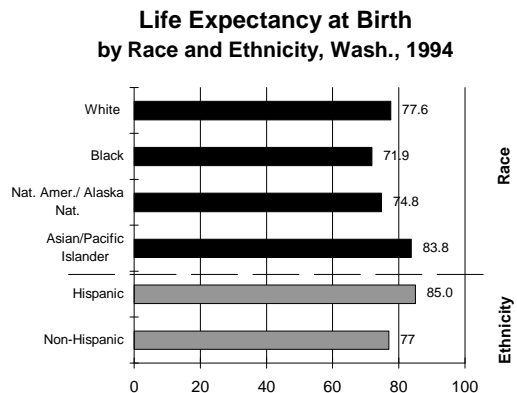


## Life Expectancy at Birth

Life expectancy generally rose in Washington during the 1980s and early 1990s. Women have consistently higher life expectancy than men.



Life expectancy at birth in Washington varies by race and ethnicity, as the chart below shows.



## Data Sources

National death data: National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)

State birth and death data: Washington Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

## For More Information

Washington Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics

## Technical Notes

Age adjustment: See technical appendix.

Race and ethnicity: See technical appendix.